

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. **(currently amended)** A hardware connection data change device, comprising:  
  
a connection data management part configured to store and manage connection data on a connection of an associated switching unit, in which the connection data change device is provided, with an external switching unit; and  
  
a change operation part configured to change a type of the connection of the associated switching unit with the external switching unit in the connection data,  
  
wherein said change operation part changes the type of the connection to the external switching unit from a variable connection type to a fixed connection type in the connection data, upon receiving a request to change the type of the connection to the external switching unit in the connection data after the connection of the variable connection type to the external switching unit is dynamically set up, before the set-up connection is reset, and  
  
the connection data management part stores information on the connection of the variable connection type after the change operation part changes the type of the connection from the variable connection type to the fixed connection type in the connection data.
2. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said change operation part changes the type of the connection with the external switching unit to the fixed or variable connection type in accordance with a command input from an outside.
3. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 1, comprising:  
  
a detection part configured to detect the external connected switching unit;

a message compilation part configured to generate a message controlling a change operation part of the detected external switching unit; and

a transmission part configured to transmit the message to the detected external switching unit.

4. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 3, further comprising an analysis part configured to receive an incoming message from the external switching unit and to analyze contents thereof, the incoming message controlling the change operation part of the associated switching unit.

5. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a release part configured to change the type of the connection with the external switching unit from the fixed connection type to the variable connection type in the connection data and to release the connection with the external switching unit.

6. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 5, further comprising:

a detection part configured to detect the external connected switching unit;

a message compilation part configured to generate a message controlling a release part of the detected external switching unit;

a transmission part configured to transmit the message to the detected external switching unit; and

an analysis part configured to receive an incoming message from the external switching unit and to analyze contents of the incoming message, the incoming message controlling the release part of the connection data change device.

7. (previously presented) The connection data change device as claimed in claim 5, further comprising a release reason storage part configured to store a valid release reason for releasing the connection with the external switching unit.

8. **(currently amended)** A connection data change method, comprising the steps of:  
dynamically setting up a connection of a variable connection type of a first switching unit with a second switching unit;

extracting connection data on the connection of the first switching unit with the second switching unit;

changing a type of the connection of the first switching unit with the second switching unit from the variable connection type to a fixed connection type in the extracted connection data, upon receiving a request to change the type of the connection of the first switching unit to the second switching unit in the extracted connection data, before the set-up connection is reset; and

storing information on the connection of the variable connection type after the type of the connection is changed from the variable connection type to the fixed connection type in the extracted connection data.

9. **(currently amended)** A switching unit, comprising:  
a connection data management part configured to store and manage connection data on a connection with an external switching unit; and  
a change operation part configured to change a type of the connection with the external switching unit in the connection data,

wherein said change operation part changes the type of the connection to the external switching unit from a variable connection type to a fixed connection type in the connection data, upon receiving a request to change the type of the connection to the external switching unit in the connection data after the connection of the variable connection type to the external switching unit is dynamically set up, before the set-up connection is reset, and

the connection data management part stores information on the connection of the variable connection type after the change operation part changes the type of the connection from the variable connection type to the fixed connection type in the connection data.

10. (previously presented) The switching unit as claimed in claim 9, further comprising:

a detection part configured to detect the external connected switching unit;

a message compilation part configured to generate a message controlling a change operation part of the detected external switching unit;

a transmission part configured to transmit the message to the detected external switching unit; and

an analysis part configured to receive an incoming message from the external switching unit and to analyze contents thereof, the incoming message controlling the change operation part of the switching unit.

11. (previously presented) The switching unit as claimed in claim 9, further comprising:

a release part configured to change the type of the connection with the external switching unit from the fixed connection type to the variable connection type in the connection data and to release the connection with the external switching unit; and

a release reason storage part configured to store a valid release reason for releasing the connection with the external switching unit.

12. **(new)** The connection data change device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the connection to the external switching unit is reset based on the stored information on the connection of the variable connection type if the type of the connection to the external switching unit in the connection data is the fixed connection type at a time of resetting the connection to the external switching unit.

13. **(new)** The connection data change method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the connection of the first switching unit with the second switching unit is reset based on the stored information on the connection of the variable connection type if the type of the connection of the first switching unit with the second switching unit in the connection data is the fixed connection type at a time of resetting the connection of the first switching unit with the second switching unit.

14. **(new)** The switching unit as claimed in claim 9, wherein the connection to the external switching unit is reset based on the stored information on the connection of the variable connection type if the type of the connection to the external switching unit in the connection data is the fixed connection type at a time of resetting the connection to the external switching unit.